

COMMUNITY FORUM



A New Approach to Student Discipline

Frequently Asked Questions on Proposed Revisions to Chapter 25

How are the revised rules different from the previous rules?

Please see the Overview & Rationale (available at our forums and on the DCPS website at http://www.k12.dc.us/chancellor/schedule_forums.htm).

Among other changes, the proposed revisions contain a master list of student behavior infractions, separated into 5 tiers, ranking infractions from the most minor to the most serious. The list also has an array of possible consequences that schools can employ to respond to infractions, with guidance that consequences should generally start with the least severe and consider factors such as context, extenuating circumstances and student's discipline history.

When will a student be suspended under the revised rules?

Under the revised rules suspension is only for major infractions (Tier III - Tier V infractions) or persistent lower level behavior. Suspension would not be used as a consequence for absence or tardiness.

When will the revised rules go into effect?

We will consider and incorporate feedback obtained from public comments and community forums and use this to revise the rules. On February 26, 2009, the revised rules will be submitted to the DC Council for a 45-day review period. The actual effective date will depend on the comments we receive, but we hope the rules will be in effect in the spring.

How do we know that principals and teachers will implement these plans fairly?

DCPS will hold training sessions to ensure that teachers and principals are using the policies consistently and appropriately. There will be clear procedures to guide school administrators in investigating, documenting, and reporting incidents and their disciplinary response.

Can elementary school students be suspended?

Under the proposed revisions, suspension for elementary students would be limited to 1 – 3 days, except in cases of extreme misbehavior or repeated/persistent lower level misbehavior.

Does the chancellor support the practice of out-of-school suspension?

We would like to move away from out-of-school suspension as it is used now. Having on-site school suspension is a more educationally viable consequence for disciplinary infractions with the proposed revisions. In order to support this change, we will expand the CHOICE program to include more seats, and more suspensions will be held in school where students will be monitored and working on their academic assignments.

Have the revisions altered the procedure for when a student is suspended?

The bulk of the suspension procedures will remain. Specifically, the current law outlines clear expectations for contact with parent/guardian, due process, record-keeping, etc. By and large, the current procedures for student suspension are appropriate as written. However, while the procedures themselves are not going to change we are going to ensure that they are more consistently enforced.

Who was involved in making the revisions?

The revisions were carried out by a committee of teachers, administrators, parents, central office staff, and community advocates. Additionally, we look forward to hearing feedback from teachers, parents, students and community members at these forums for inclusion into proposed revisions.

How can students appeal disciplinary procedures?

A student who has been suspended for fewer than eleven days may appeal the decision (See Section 2505). Students who are suspended for eleven days or more have the right to a hearing (See Section 2505.14).

How will the proposed revisions affect special education students?

Chapter 25 includes a specific section on policies and procedures for students with disabilities. We are revising this section primarily to ensure it complies with the most recently approved version of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). There are no differences in expectations or in the list of consequences; however, as there have been in the past, there are different procedures we must follow for this group of students.